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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000548

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KTIP](#) [IN](#) [NE](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: SOLIDARITY CENTER HEAD HITS THE GROUND RUNNING

REF: A. DOHA 211
[1](#)B. DOHA 236

Classified By: Charge d'affaires Mirembe L. Nantongo for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- At a recent meeting with Poloff Caudill, Solidarity Center representative Boyko Atanasov reported that the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) had been very helpful in assisting with his work in Qatar.

-- Atanasov said that (so far) the NHRC had lived up to its commitments under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) it signed with the Solidarity Center earlier this year (Ref A). The NHRC had assisted him with securing his work permit and housing, and had given him a work space in the NHRC offices.

-- Through Atanasov's efforts, a senior Qatari in the NHRC Legal Division went to the U.S. for consultations this summer, and an aide from the Office of the NHRC Chairman held meetings the Indian state of Kerala, one of the main sources of expatriate labor in Qatar.

-- Atanasov also reported that the NHRC had published a labor rights booklet in English and in Arabic as a follow-up to the anti-TIP media campaign it conducted in March (Ref B), and that the Solidarity Center was partnering with it to provide translations in the languages of the main labor-sending countries.

(C) COMMENTS

-- Agreeing to partner with a foreign labor organization such as the Solidarity Center was a major step for the GOQ, particularly since it tends to view the rights of expatriate workers more as a national security than a human rights issue. It is encouraging that the NHRC, which considers itself an independent non-governmental organization but is controlled by the GOQ, is cooperating with Atanasov and the Solidarity Center.

-- While this growing partnership is a good sign, it must be stressed that the Solidarity Center's work focuses primarily on the conditions in the labor sending countries that lead to trafficking in persons (TIP) in Qatar. Aside from the labor rights booklet, this partnership has not yet addressed the issue of Qatar's responsibility to combat TIP within its own borders.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (SBU) At an August 20 meeting with Poloff Caudill, Solidarity Center representative Boyko Atanasov reported that the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) had been very helpful in assisting with his work in Qatar. He said that NHRC staff had assisted him in acquiring the necessary work permits allowing him to establish residency in Qatar, and had provided assistance in his search for housing. (He was previously occupying office space in the NHRC offices in Doha.)

¶2. (SBU) Atanasov also reported success in opening channels of communications between officials at the NHRC and labor activists, both in the main labor-sending countries and in the U.S. He noted that an official from the NHRC Legal Division traveled to the U.S. for consultations, which included meetings with Solidarity Center representatives and with the president of the Sri Lankan trade unions association. Atanasov had also accompanied a senior aide to the NHRC Chairman to the Indian state of Kerala, where they met with labor and government leaders both from India and Nepal (Note: The Indian expatriate population in Qatar is the largest, numbering approximately 500,000; the Nepalese population is the second largest at approximately 300,000.)

¶3. (SBU) Atanasov noted that when the NHRC conducted its anti-TIP media campaign in March, it had pledged to publish a labor rights brochure in the languages of the major labor-sending countries. So far, he said, the brochure had been published and distributed only in English and Arabic.

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The Solidarity Center therefore plans to pay for translating the materials into Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, and other languages common to laborers in Qatar. The brochures would then be published and distributed to them with the cooperation of the NHRC and the GOQ.
Nantongo